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A Mother's Diary

by [lrasst](#)

Summary

A story of a girl crushing on a teenager, told in the perspective of her mother.

Fareeha and the Ponytail

Ever since I joined Overwatch, I worried about whether keeping Fareeha with me was the right decision. Things have settled down since we put an end to the Omnic Crisis, but that doesn't make my job as a mother less stressful. We continue as a peacekeeping organization, which means that we're still flitting between different parts of the world. Our organization can't justify hiring a private tutor just for my Fareeha, so between our rotating shifts out in the field, my co-workers and I take turns homeschooling her.

There are many reasons to be worried about her schooling. None of us have been officially trained in education. Another is that although I make sure to speak to Fareeha in my mother tongue, the universal language of Overwatch is English. Recently she started responding to my Arabic in English, and I gave her a good scolding afterwards. Now whenever she's lazy, she uses Arabic for nouns and verbs, but slides in English elsewhere, in the place of pronouns and the like. I hope my daughter will retain her fluency in the language of her ancestors.

Schooling aside, Fareeha spends most of her time around people much older than her. There hasn't been a word of complaint from her; she seems to love it. Whereas many children these days grow up around computer games, I don't have the time to find such easy entertainment for Fareeha. But even if she did have her own computer, I think there is still nothing she adores more than sitting on each adult's lap, and listening to their stories. Reinhardt is a particular favourite of hers, and the old lion certainly has no lack of embellished tales to tell.

We are never in any place too long, but each time I encourage Fareeha to make friends her age in the surrounding areas. But due to trouble revolving around language barriers, my Fareeha has grown quiet and shy. Now, even when we move to an English-speaking country, she would rather stay in the base than play with the other kids. We keep a lot of balls around, both for easy games of basketball for the adults, but also in hopes that Fareeha will bring new friends back. I suppose it must be hard on Fareeha, knowing that no matter how close she got to these children, she would likely never see them in person again.

For these reasons, I was overjoyed with the newest addition to our team. Her name is Angela Ziegler, and she is a prodigy from Switzerland. As a mere teenager, she is already a licensed doctor, and has real life experience as a medic. The child lost her parents in the Omnic Crisis, and starting serving as soon as they died. She is only five years older than my Fareeha. Even if she weren't killing anything, nobody that young should be on the battlefield.

Fareeha seemed to take a shining to Angela right away. I doubt most of my teammates would have noticed, but mothers have keen eyes. Fareeha keeps her distance from Angela, as if she doesn't know what to do, but I know she watches her a lot. Angela doesn't spend a lot of time in the common areas. She prefers to hole herself up inside the research lab, scribbling down words in English that are too long for my tongue to wrap around. Fareeha didn't have much reason to go there before, but now I find her peeking through windows in the doors. The first time I caught her doing it, I laughed and told her to fetch Angela some supper. The young doctor frequently forgets to eat and sleep, making her little more than a pile of skin and bones, which is completely unacceptable to go into battle with. Still, she insists, and I always make sure to watch her through the scope of my rifle, making sure she stays safe.

When Fareeha brought Angela a platter with food, she left it next to her and tried to leave without saying anything. Angela has a skill with tuning out the presence of the large, heavy adults, but being interrupted by a child is unexpected for her. Angela noticed Fareeha, and thanked her for the consideration, but explained that it is a health hazard to eat in a lab. Fareeha turned as red as I

have ever seen her, and said the first word she had ever said to her: “sorry”. Angela said there was nothing to be sorry about and invited Fareeha to eat with her in the main common room. Fareeha nodded her agreement, but spent the majority of Angela’s meal looking up at her.

This morning I found the bed that I share with my daughter empty. It surprised me because Fareeha is the type of child that has a hard time falling asleep at night, and a hard time rising in the morning. I always wake up first, and it’s always a hassle to get her out of bed. But this morning she was in the washroom, staring at herself in the mirror. She was holding an elastic band in her mouth, and she was clumsily trying to tie up her hair.

“Ya habibti”, I said to her. “You should use a proper hairband to tie your hair. An elastic band will tear out your hair when you try to take it off.”

“Oh”, said Fareeha, who promptly dropped the elastic. She brushed her hair and reached for her usual hair ornaments. The gold trinkets had been mine as a child, and I had passed them on to Fareeha.

“Are you looking to change your style? I thought you liked these.” Fareeha blushed and looked at her feet.

“Sorry Mama. It’s just that lately I’ve been thinking that Angela has the prettiest hair. It’s so light and fluffy, she looks like an angel.”

My baby is so adorable.

“You wanted to look like Angela?”

“Yeah, but I don’t have pretty hair like hers, so I’d probably look stupid.”

“Child, don’t tell your mama she didn’t give you beautiful hair”, I said jokingly. “Come here.”

I took one of my rarely-used hairbands, and brushed Fareeha’s hair into a neat ponytail. Her hair is thick and soft. I wanted to cry when Fareeha said she wanted to start doing her hair by herself. She said she wasn’t a baby anymore. I missed playing with her hair.

“All done!” I said to her.

“It’s not the same”, she said. Despite her words, I could hear that Fareeha was pleased with how the ponytail turned out.

“Would you like to show Angela?”

Fareeha’s face looked like I had just slipped an earthworm down the back of her shirt when she wasn’t looking.

“No! That’s embarrassing!” She reached to take out the hairband, stopped to admire herself by turning her head slightly to the left and right, and then took down the ponytail. I tried to put on her hair ornaments for her, but she protested. “I can do it myself!”

She must have seen the pout on my face, the kind that I have too much respect for myself to show in front of the others.

Fareeha tugged at my hand until I bent down on a knee in front of her. She is quite short for her age. Then she whispered in my ear, “can you help me put up a ponytail tomorrow too? I just want to look for a little.”

I pulled that child tightly into my arms.

I wish she'd never grow up.

Fareeha and Candy

It seems that it's a mother's job to worry. It goes without saying that Overwatch rarely gets supplied with fresh fruits and vegetables. It's hard enough to make a tasty meal with the canned produce we get, but we take turns making meals for everyone living on the base, and some members... put in less effort than others. Sometimes it's hard enough for even me to swallow some things that come out of that kitchen. Fareeha is picky when it comes to food that isn't Egyptian. Sometimes she walks away from the table without eating anything.

I scold her, of course, but I usually figure that she'll come back when she gets hungry. Sometimes she does, but many times she goes to bed without a meal. I want her to be able to eat anything, because if she wants to become a soldier like she says, her culinary situation won't change much. So most of the time, I don't say anything. But her stomach doesn't growl the way I expect it to at night, so I suspect she's getting food elsewhere. So I decided to do some investigating.

I've been following her around in my free time. The way she spends her free time is usually pretty routine. When she's not climbing everything or listening to the men drone on with their stories, she's on her tablet, researching things that interest her, and drawing pictures of mech suits and army uniforms.

She usually spends her day in the main common room, perched on the edge of the mezzanine on her stomach, and kicking her feet back and forth. She has the preference for heights like a sniper, but I doubt she has the patience for it.

"Fareeha!" boomed Reinhardt's voice from below. "Uncle Reinhardt brought home some Haribo."

Fareeha peeked over the ledge. "It's not liquorice is it?" she asked

His laughter was deafening. "Nein, I know you don't like the best candy in the world. I have Goldbären."

My jaw dropped when I saw Fareeha jump from the mezzanine to a sofa below. Does she always do that? I need to scold her later.

"Thanks Uncle Reinhardt! You're the best!"

Suddenly there was a commotion in the common room. Jack, Torbjörn, and Liao leapt to their feet, and reached deep into their pockets, as if they were always prepared for this situation.

"Look at what I have!" said Liao. "White rabbits! You like these, right Fareeha?"

"Don't be silly Liao", said Torbjörn. "She likes these Swedish Fish more!"

"Hey kid, heads up", said Jack. Using his thumb, he flicked a Skittle high into the air. Fareeha caught it with her mouth.

The men began squabbling over themselves, trying to be the first to place candy into Fareeha's outstretched hands. Fareeha's smile was as bright as the sun.

"Thank you!"

"Who do you like best? Me, right?" said Liao, smiling and pointing at himself.

“She said I was the best already!” protested Reinhardt.

“Do you want to make models of the mech suits you drew today?” asked Torbjörn. “I can make them move!”

Jack grunted.

Fareeha’s smile never left her face. “I like you all!” She skipped away with her small hoard of candy. If she has a stash, I will find it, and I will make her watch me eat it in front of her.

The moment Fareeha left the room, I emerged from my hiding spot, and approached the men from behind. I put my hands on my hips. They didn’t notice me until they heard my disappointed tsking.

It was a good scolding. Liao turned red, and Reinhardt nervously rubbed the back of his head.

I went to find Fareeha, but she wasn’t in our room. The first place I went to check was the lab. Lo and behold, there she was. She must have been watching Angela the whole time I was reprimanding the men. But as I took my spot stalking the stalker, Angela must have noticed Fareeha this time. I heard her invite her in.

“What’s that?” I heard Fareeha say.

“Oh, it’s one of my favourite chocolate from Switzerland. It’s called Toblerone. Thank goodness it’s popular everywhere. Would you like to try some?”

“I thought it was a health hazard to eat in the lab?”

Angela laughed. It was sweet and high, like the ringing of bells. I couldn’t see her from where I was, but I could almost feel the heat from my daughter’s blush.

“Don’t worry, it’s ok to eat in the office.”

“Thank you”, said Fareeha in a much quieter voice than she used with the Overwatch men. “I like chocolate the most.” Her voice was so sincere I wasn’t sure if I should tell Angela off for giving Fareeha sweets.

That evening, Angela joined us for dinner. Reinhardt had prepared the meal, and he was one of the better cooks in the base.

“Yum, yum, nothing can get between a German man and a good bratwurst”, laughed Reinhardt. He eyed Fareeha’s plate, which was piled as high as his with the sausages. “But a child must eat vegetables to grow big and strong too”, he added quickly, with little conviction.

“Uncle Reinhardt went through the trouble of making sauerkraut for you, make sure you try some”, I told Fareeha. Although I usually speak to her in Arabic, when we’re at the dinner table I use English so everyone can be part of the conversation.

“Don’t want it”, she said simply, nose turned up at the offending dish. Reinhardt deflated.

“Well I think it’s delicious!” said Angela. “I like eating it in the same bite as a piece of bratwurst.”

Angela put on a show of eating, making small noises of satisfaction, and kept one eye slightly open to see how Fareeha would act.

Fareeha looked back and forth between the bowl of sauerkraut and Angela, until she finally took a

small forkful and put it on her plate. She took a piece, and nibbled at it like a mouse. I could tell from the look on her face that she wasn't a fan.

I sighed, and made space on my plate for her to put the cabbage on, but to my surprise, she neatly cut off a piece of bratwurst, put some sauerkraut on the same fork, and ate just as Angela did. My eyebrows almost flew off my face when she did it a second time. And then she took a second helping.

Reinhardt breathed a sigh of relief and ruffled Fareeha's hair before turning back to his meal.

Angela smiled sweetly at Fareeha.

Fareeha smiled back.

Fareeha and the Sky

The fruits of Angela's labour ripened today. She had been working on her new suit for the last few months, but I have no doubt that she had been nursing the idea for years.

She calls it the "Valkyrie swift-response suit", and it still needs a little work, at least from the aesthetics side. She designed it to allow her to fly between allies, so she can get to the injured more quickly.

Today was a beautiful, cloudless day. The perfect weather to test her suit.

A bunch of us older Overwatch members were watching Angela fly between the cliffs of Ilios, in case something went wrong. She had explained how it worked, but I couldn't understand most of the details. The most I got was that the suit is attracted to blood for now; she's working on finding a way to make it work with omnis as well. The halo-shaped helmet she designed is what detects blood, and she can direct her flight path by pointing it in the right direction.

That afternoon, she was controlling a drone carrying a vial of pig's blood we picked up at the butcher's, and chasing it around with her suit. It's not real controlled flight, but it looks pretty close. I asked her why she didn't just get herself a mech suit that could fly. Angela said that they're too heavy, use too much fuel, and are so noisy it would draw a sniper's attention right away. I agreed.

My cybernetic eye improves my vision by six fold, so I could see Angela's flight in crisp detail. I watched for any falters, any looks of uncertainty or fear on Angela's face. There weren't any, so I let my attention wander for a bit, and I saw Fareeha sitting on the edge of a cliff, watching Angela. She was wearing a white, sleeveless dress I got her.

She doesn't like wearing dresses very much. Fareeha likes to run at full speed, and either the dress gets in the way, or it rides up to reveal her bum. She wouldn't mind the second part if I didn't chastise her for doing it.

"They're not going to let me become a soldier like this", she had whined.

Exactly, I thought.

Although she doesn't like how dresses restrict her movement, I know Fareeha thinks they're pretty. Angela has a similar attitude, and the only dresses she has in her wardrobe are from me.

Fareeha jumped a little when I approached her from behind.

"You don't have to worry about her falling. Angela knows what she's doing."

"No, that's not what I was thinking", said Fareeha, moving her chin to let them rest on her knees. "I just wish I could fly like her. Wouldn't it be fun if we could play tag in the sky?"

"What are you saying? You can already fly!"

I picked Fareeha up under her arms, and put her on my back. I stooped over until my upper body was parallel to the ground and stretched out my arms. Fareeha always loved to fly. No matter how sad she was, doing this never failed to bring a smile to her face.

With her arms outstretched, Fareeha laughed as children do: honest and uninhibited. I ran in circles, imitating airplane sounds, Fareeha's laughter my jet fuel. After a while, my lower back

ached, but I did not stop until I heard a camera shutter.

Angela has an old polaroid camera. Ever since their invention in the 20th century, those instant cameras have been coming in and out of style. It's pretty common to make fun of people who like to use old technology. I find them awfully inconvenient, but they do have their uses sometimes.

"Having fun?" asked Angela, as she waiting for the photograph she had just taken to print and dry. "I saw you while I was in the air. My camera was nearby, and I just couldn't resist taking a picture."

Angela handed me the photo of Fareeha flying on my back, her white dress fluttering behind her. Fareeha likes to call Angela an angel, but my daughter is truly the one from heaven.

"Thank you", I choked, embarrassed at my sudden rush of emotions.

"Would you like to see what it's like?" Angela asked Fareeha.

Fareeha gasped and stared at Angela. "Do you mean...? Oh Mama! Can I go? Can I please fly with Angela?"

I wanted to say no. Half of me knew that I could trust Angela, but the other half insisted that if something went wrong, I'd lose both of them instead of one. But with the way Fareeha looked up at me, with her eyes wide and shining, there was no way I could turn her down.

"Wait for me here", I told the two.

I made a quick trip to the base to pick up the things we would need.

For her last birthday, Torbjörn made Fareeha a black, plastic suit that looked like a mech suit, but without any of the functionality. It did; however, have a button on the palm that Fareeha could press to make shooting noises. The helmet paid homage to Anubis, an old god, but I didn't bring it so Fareeha could feel the wind in her hair.

I helped Fareeha into the suit, but she had a growth spurt recently and had already grown too tall for it. We didn't attach the gauntlets or boots, and I decided to let her go barefoot to avoid the risk of losing a shoe in the Mediterranean Sea.

I picked Fareeha up, and put her standing on top of Angela's feet.

"Mama!" She protested, cheeks darkening furiously.

"How did you think she'd take you flying? By towing you with a string?"

Angela laughed at my retort, and helped lift Fareeha's arms to the side. In my rush to keep Fareeha and Angela from waiting too long, I had grabbed the first thing I saw from the base that would work. Starting at the shoulder, I duct taped Angela and Fareeha together, making a thick "x", and then for good measure, around their midribs and chests.

"Can you breathe?" I asked.

"No", said Fareeha.

"Good."

I handed each of them an earpiece and microphone, and put a set on myself.

“Tell me if anything goes wrong.”

“Will do, Captain Amari”, said Angela.

Angela gave Fareeha the controller to the drone, and without needing me to ask, wrapped her arms around Fareeha as an extra security measure.

I did my best to suppress my chuckle at Fareeha’s flustered expression.

“One last thing”, I said. Using my thumb, I traced a pattern, first under Fareeha’s right eye, and then under Angela’s. “It’s the Eye of Horus”, I explained. “For protection.”

Then I nodded, signalling that they could go.

Fareeha sent the drone flying, and Angela launched them high into the air.

Fareeha made a strangled noise somewhere between a gasp and a squeal, and I watched her almost drop the controller, except that Angela grabbed it before it fell.

“Mama!” I heard through the earpiece. “Do you see me! Are you watching Mama? Look, Mama, I’m *flying*!”

I watched them soar through the clear, blue skies for a bit, listening to Fareeha’s laughter. When it looked like they were going to be safe, I looked down at the photo I held of Fareeha riding on my back. I wondered if she would laugh like that for me ever again.

I turned off my microphone and cried.

Fareeha and the Poster

Fareeha asked for money to buy a couple of posters. I told her that we could just order them from the company that manages the public relations and advertising of Overwatch, but she said she didn't want the others finding out. Since it's a rare occasion for Fareeha to leave the base and explore the city, I agreed.

She wanted to go into the city by herself. I wasn't worried too much, because we were in an English speaking region, and Fareeha is skilled enough in martial arts to defend herself against most adults. Still, I wanted to spend my day off with her, and since I hadn't actually handed over any money yet, she had no choice but to roll her eyes and let me tag along.

We found a small speciality shop carrying Overwatch merchandise located across the street from a small park. There were children Fareeha's age kicking around a soccer ball.

"Wait for me outside, Mama", said Fareeha. "I know what I want, so I'll be quick."

"Why so secretive, habibti? Can't I see what my daughter buys with my money?"

"But Mama! You're so embarrassing! Please let me do this myself, just once!"

I thought over the situation a little.

"Ok, Fareeha, I'll wait outside. But only if you play with those kids in the park over there".

"Mama!" she protested.

"Well?"

"Ok, fine", she said gruffly.

Judging from the thickness of the paper rolled into a tube, Fareeha bought more than one poster.

"Can I see?" I asked.

"No!" she said.

"You got a poster of Angela, didn't you?" I asked. I smirked and winked at her.

"O-of course not! Why would I do something so embarrassing?"

"If you say so. Now, do as you promised", I said, jerking my head in the direction of the park.

"Hey!" I yelled. I waved my arm in the air until all the children in park stared.

"Mama! You're embarrassing me!" I ignored her and dragged her in front of the others.

"Can she play too?"

The boys heard my accent, looked at each other, and then at Fareeha.

"I don't know", said one of them. "She's just a little girl. Can she even kick a ball?"

"Can I kick a ball?!" repeated Fareeha, completely offended. "I'll show you how to kick a ball!"

Fareeha grabbed the soccer ball from the arm of a boy, dropped it from waist-level, and swung her

leg as hard as it would go.

It soared above everyone's heads, over the soccer net at the end of the field, and got stuck in the high branches of a tree.

"Look at what you've done!" they yelled angrily.

"I'm sorry!" Fareeha didn't sound even a little bit sincere. "I'll go get it."

I held onto her posters and watched Fareeha approach the tree. If I were her, I would have given up on it, since there weren't any low-hanging branches, but Fareeha grabbed the rough edges of the trunk, and scampered up it.

"Look at the little squirrel climbing up the tree!" yelled a kid.

"It's so small! How will it get the ball down?" cried another.

"We should help!" said a third.

While Fareeha was inching closer to the ball on the thin branches of the tree, a stone whirled its way in her direction, snapping a twig a metre above Fareeha's head.

"Hey! Don't do that!" I commanded, waving Fareeha's posters threateningly at them.

The boys didn't listen and ran in opposite directions, laughing and throwing rocks at Fareeha.

There were six of them. I wouldn't have been able to catch them all. *Dare I hit a child?* I thought. I grabbed the closest one by the collar of his shirt, but I wouldn't have been able to snatch the other five towing the first with me.

Fareeha, for her part, was doing a pretty good job of dodging the rocks, and most didn't come close to her anyway. She managed to inch her way to the ball, and knocked it down from the branches.

"The ball's down! You can stop now!" she called.

The boys didn't seem to care. They kept throwing their rocks over my angry yelling. Their laughter was loud, but I heard Fareeha's yelp over it all, when a rock finally found its mark on Fareeha's bare leg.

My mind blurred for the next few seconds, and I had a vague recollection of yelling profanities in Arabic, picking up exactly five stones, and throwing them, but not before the last boy threw a rock that struck Fareeha in the shoulder. I watched her fall in slow-motion, but even she looked surprised when she landed on her feet, like a piece of toast landing buttered side down.

When I came to, the five boys were on the ground, crying and holding their shins. I let go of the boy I was holding who was struggling to get free. I did the wrong thing, I know. If they were to learn from their actions, they needed a good talking to, not corporal punishment. But I wasn't thinking straight. I ran to my Fareeha and pulled her to my arms.

"Let me see where they hurt you!" I said.

I pulled the fabric off Fareeha's shoulder, revealing an ugly bruise, but I could barely see it through the tears I didn't know were in my eyes.

"Mama, Mama, I'm ok", she tried to reassure me. "I'm only bleeding a little."

“Bleeding?” I roared so loud, Fareeha jumped.

I sprinted the five kilometres back to our base with her in my arms. A thin line of blood trickled its way down Fareeha’s leg. Fareeha clutched her posters to her chest. I must’ve scared her into silence.

Everyone asked me what happened, seeing me drenched in sweat and out of breath. I rushed right past them without answering, and headed straight towards the infirmary.

Angela happened to be there at the time, probably inspecting the medical supplies. I startled her when I barged in through the door, and gently laid Fareeha down on the medical table.

“It’s just a scratch”, Fareeha mumbled to Angela. “It’s nothing, really.”

“I’ve heard that line way too much from every soldier I’ve ever treated”, said Angela. “Don’t get too used to saying it. Tell me what happened.”

Fareeha recounted the story, and as Angela inspected her, I paced anxiously around the room, mumbling in Arabic until Angela ordered me out.

I wanted to argue, but I couldn’t help but respond in Arabic, which was completely useless, so I did as was asked and pressed my face against the glass wall. I felt so guilty. Fareeha wouldn’t have gotten hurt if it weren’t for me.

They talked for a while, and I eventually curled up in a ball in the hallway, fantasizing about finding the children’s parents and yelling at them. I ignored the concerned words of my teammates.

Later that night, I found Fareeha sitting in front of our bed, unrolling the posters. There were two, one of Reinhardt, and one of Angela. In the scuffle in the park, the poster of Angela had gotten torn halfway down the middle.

“Are you ok?” I asked her.

“Don’t worry, Mama. It took Angela two seconds to patch me up. Angela said that it doesn’t matter how much you get hurt, she can always fix you up.”

“That’s not what I meant...”

“She said that for injuries that go untreated, there might be some scars.”

Fareeha aligned the edges of the ripped poster, and began applying tape to the back.

“She said that if you’ve been broken, you might not look the same afterwards. But it doesn’t mean you’re broken forever. You’re just different. It’s not a good or bad thing”, said Fareeha.

Fareeha flipped the poster to the front, and we both looked at the image of Angela. She was dressed her in Valkyrie suit, in a heroic pose, with her chest pushed out proudly. The rip in the poster had cut down her face and torso, but the tape held the poster together.

Fareeha smiled at me. “Look, I can fix Angela too.”

I wasn’t sure if Fareeha understood the significance of what she was saying.

“Listen, what happened in the park wasn’t your fault.”

“I know, Mama, I’m already over it. And it wasn’t your fault either.”

I had cried enough already that day, and I didn’t want to cry in front of Fareeha again. Instead I just ruffled her hair.

“So. You got a poster of Reinhardt and Angela. How about me?”

Fareeha stared at me, dumbfounded.

“Why would I need a poster of you? I have the real thing!”

I laughed and shook my head.

“Oh, you! I love you so much!”

Fareeha looked puzzled, but still responded, “I love you too, Mama.”

I looked at the picture of Angela’s face again, and I was grateful for her words to Fareeha. I felt so sorry for Angela’s parents who could never see who she had become. I was so proud of her, she truly felt like a second daughter.

“Can you keep this a secret?” said Fareeha, rolling up the poster of Angela, and hiding it under the bed. “It would be embarrassing if anyone found out I had this.”

“I promise”, I responded.

“Now, I’m going to ask Reinhardt to sign his poster. He’s so cool.”

As Fareeha left to find Reinhardt, I sat on our bed and relaxed. I could hear Reinhardt’s voice booming down the halls.

“I remember taking this picture! They made my hair look amazing!”

Fareeha and Nap Time

Things in the base have gotten livelier recently. We have been steadily getting more and more members as our fame continues to spread. I've been spending more time on missions, but Overwatch has been generating revenue by turning a handful of us into celebrities. This means that even though I don't have time to homeschool Fareeha anymore, we were able to hire a tutor for her, so all is well in that regard.

Jesse McCree is a boy Angela's age. Apparently he was something of a trouble-maker. When we took him in to Overwatch, he was assigned to work in Blackwatch with Gabriel. The two of them are visiting our base for a few weeks while Gabriel and Jack get some administrative things out of the way.

I don't know the full details of Jesse's life before he came, but he seems like a good boy. My Fareeha was comfortable with him right away, as she was when she met my other co-workers for the first time. Recently, they were playing together, and had managed to drag Angela into it.

I was removing the laundry from the drying machine when it happened. I heard the pitter-patter of Fareeha's footsteps before I saw her.

"Mama!" she called breathlessly. "Hide me!"

"Ya habibti, what is the matter?"

"They're going to catch me!"

I could guess who Fareeha was talking about, so I let Fareeha climb into the wicker laundry basket I was using, and covered her with as many sheets as I could without suffocating her.

It wasn't even a minute before Angela and Jesse arrived at the laundry room, coming from opposite directions of the hall. Angela was completely out of breath.

"Dang, she's fast", said Jesse.

"I could've sworn she ran down here", said Angela with much effort.

"She did, but she climbed up that air vent before I could stop her!" I said. "You'd better hurry! It leads to the roof of the building."

"Thanks ma'am", said Jesse, who tipped his hat and started towards the staircase. "You coming, Angela?"

"Just give me a moment to catch my breath."

Jesse smirked. "If you dilly-dally too much I'm going to catch her first and win." He then sprinted away.

Once he was out of earshot, Angela grinned and lifted an eyebrow at me. "This air vent doesn't go to the roof."

"When did you have time to memorize the blueprint to this building", I laughed.

"They don't call me a prodigy for nothing", she replied.

Angela peeked into the washing and drying machines.

“Your basket is pretty small for this amount of laundry”, said Angela. “It’s already full and there’s still a lot left in the drying machine.”

Before I could formulate a convincing excuse, Angela pulled the sheets off Fareeha, and caught her under the arms before she could slip away. She lifted Fareeha out of the basket and onto her feet.

“I win!” Angela declared.

Fareeha giggled and squirmed under Angela’s grasp. “Let me go!” she breathed. “It tickles!”

Angela’s mischievous smile reached from ear-to-ear, and she started moving her fingers against Fareeha’s sides until Fareeha was rolling on the floor, tears squeezing out from the corners of her eyes from laughing so much.

Angela is usually so serious about her work. I had never seen her look so much like her age before.

It’s always been a personal habit of mine to take naps. While I was in Egypt, I’d nap during the hottest parts of the day. I stopped for a little bit when Fareeha was younger.

Fareeha was, and still is, full of energy. She expends far more energy than I remember doing as a child. I tried scheduling regular naps for her, but she always refused, running away instead. The first time she did it, she was three. I lay down for my nap, with Fareeha tucked carefully under my arm. When I woke up, she wasn’t there. She had wandered off outside and it took me hours to find her playing in the mud in a stranger’s garden. I only started napping again when I joined Overwatch, where I could rely on others to keep an eye on her.

Even though Fareeha is already twelve, I still encourage her to take naps. Fareeha has a tendency to work herself much harder than her body can handle. Even though she refuses to nap when I tell her to, she often crashes a few hours later, and then it’s harder to put her to sleep at night.

Angela is troublesome too. Right now, she occupies the room next to ours, and I can hear her opening and closing the heavy metal door, even when she tries to be as quiet as possible. As a soldier, I’m accustomed to waking at any noise, and I know that Angela often doesn’t go to bed until far past midnight. If I wake up in the morning and haven’t been awoken the night before, I go straight to the lab to find her asleep on her desk.

Angela is something of a heavy sleeper. Sometimes someone comes in from a night mission needing emergency treatment. It used to be that we had to bang on her door for ten minutes straight before she woke up. Now she just keeps her door unlocked so we can shake her awake. When she passes out on her desk like this, she’s dead to the world.

When I find her there, I carry her to her room, although it’s not as easy as when I do it for Fareeha. I may be a soldier, but I’m specifically a sniper, and I’m not as heavily built as some of my comrades. Fareeha tries to help, but the most she can do is help keep Angela’s feet a little higher in the air.

Recently I saw a very strange thing.

Right before my usual nap, I ran into Fareeha in the hall, pushing a couch that someone had attached wheels to the bottom of.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“Angela fell asleep at her desk again.”

Intrigued, I followed Fareeha to the lab. Someone had draped a blanket over Angela’s shoulders.

Fareeha surprised me when she managed to partially lift Angela. Angela's head teetered dangerously close to the ground, and I stooped to catch her. We laid her down on the couch together.

Fareeha covered Angela with the thin blanket, and tucked her in.

“The lab is pretty cold”, I said. “Maybe you should nap with her to keep her warm”, I said as a joke.

“Ok”, said Fareeha, to my astonishment.

Fareeha climbed under the blanket with Angela and rested her head under Angela's chin, just as she does when she sleeps with me at night.

Kid got some guts.

I took down Angela’s ponytail and gently brushed some stray hairs off her forehead. Fareeha touched her hair, with a look of pure amazement on her face.

Angela’s eyelashes fluttered open then. She took one look at Fareeha, mumbled something in German, and fell back asleep.

From that day on, Fareeha and Angela took regular naps.

Fareeha and the Sweater

Like me, Fareeha doesn't like the cold. It's one of the reasons why she doesn't complain about sleeping with me at night. The other reason is that Overwatch has always been short on beds, which is a problem exacerbated as we get more members. We might need to start using larger buildings at this rate.

We moved locations again. We'll be spending some time in Russia to solve a local conflict between the people and omnis.

Because we won't be here very long, we're not staying in a large base, and people have to share rooms. The bedrooms are tall, but otherwise very small. Each one has the space for a three-tiered bunk bed, but that's about it.

Angela is staying with Fareeha and me. When we first entered the room, Fareeha claimed the top bunk immediately. She doesn't want Angela to know that she normally sleeps with me, so she bravely starts the night in her own bed. It doesn't last very long though. Once she hears Angela breathing at regular intervals, she slips under my covers, cold and shivering. I don't think Angela has found out yet, since we usually wake up first. But I'm tempted to let Fareeha sleep in so Angela can see what a darling Fareeha is, and then we can tease her together.

I haven't done it yet. I'm so nice.

Fareeha likes to sit in front of the window in the kitchen. It's not something she usually does, but here, she likes to watch the snow fall. She's seen snow a few times before when we moved around in the north, but it's still something that amazes her.

"Why don't you go outside?" I asked Fareeha, sipping some tea from my cup.

"It's too cold."

"But this is an excellent opportunity to use the winter clothes I bought for you. They're just sitting in your suitcase, gathering dust."

It took some time, but I eventually pestered Fareeha enough until she agreed. We stopped by the lab on our way back to our room.

"Angela", I called out. "You've been working long enough. It's time for a break."

The girl in question poked her head out of the lab. She was wearing a thick, white sweater I had knit for her eighteenth birthday.

"Awww, do I have to?"

"Yes, we're going outside. Get dressed."

"Please, Angela?" said Fareeha. "I wanna play with you."

It would take a heart of stone to say no to those puppy-dog eyes. A heart of stone, Angela has not.

I bundled Fareeha up in so many layers she was basically a round cream puff. I could see her starting to sweat, so she shuffled as fast to the exit of the building as her four pairs of pants would allow her.

Angela was only wearing the sweater, a jacket, a pair of gloves, and snow pants. She followed Fareeha scurrying outside. There had been light snowfall the night before, and the snow reached slightly above our ankles. Fareeha breathed a puff of air, and watched her breath turn white.

She looked a little uncertain.

“What do we do with snow?” she asked.

“We could make snow angels”, suggested Angela. “Watch.”

Angela let herself fall backwards into the snow, moved her arms up and down, and her legs from side-to-side.

“Wow! It does look like an angel!” said Fareeha. Instead of making her own, Fareeha crawled into the snow angel Angela had just made. “It’s not cold at all!”

I laughed. “That’s because you’re wearing so much, habibti.”

Fareeha flipped onto her back and made a snow angel next to Angela’s.

“Look! They’re holding hands!” said Fareeha. “What do we do next?”

We spent the next hour-or-so making a snowman. As we worked, Fareeha and Angela chatted away.

“Why do they call you “Mercy” on the TV and stuff, instead of using your real name?” asked Fareeha.

“I don’t know, it sounds cooler. Plus, heroes can’t use their real names, you know”, said Angela with a wink.

“You’re right!” said Fareeha. “I need to think of a hero name too! Oh, and I need a catch phrase! Yours is so cool! Helden sterben nicht! What does it mean, again?”

“It means “heroes never die!””

“Mama! Help me think of a hero name and catch phrase!”

“Hmmm”, I said. “How about Farah? It a variant of Fareeha, but easier to say. Did you know, Angela? Fareeha means “happiness”, or “joy”. Because Fareeha is the joy of my life.” I snatched Fareeha before she could run away, and peppered her cheek with kisses.

“Mama!” Fareeha’s cheeks were hot, and she tried to push me away. “You’re being so embarrassing!”

I laughed and let her go. “You can spell it with a “p-h” instead of “f”, so it looks more like “pharaoh”. Then it looks super cool, right?”

“It’s not cool if your mom thinks it’s cool!” said Fareeha.

Suddenly a snowball hit Fareeha in the side of her head.

“Angela! What was that for?” squawked Fareeha.

“Angela? Who’s Angela? I am Dr. Ziegler, the mad scientist! If it weren’t for you, Pharah, I would have taken over the world by now! Today I will finally bring you and the famous Captain Amari down!”

“Oh no!” I yelled, scooping up snow, and handing Fareeha a snowball. “Save me, Pharah!”

Fareeha’s face cracked into a gigantic, toothy smile.

“I’ll save you, Mama!” she threw the snowball, but her many layers restricted her movement, making the pitch weak. Angela easily sidestepped it.

I watched the two exchange snowballs for a bit until Angela ducked behind a snow mound to catch her breath.

“Captain Amari! I require assistance!” screeched Fareeha.

“Back-up is on its way!” I replied.

I whispered our plan into Fareeha’s ear. While Angela was recovering, Fareeha and I loaded my hat with as many snowballs as we could fit.

Fareeha climbed onto my shoulders, which was quite a balancing act as Fareeha was getting quite tall. I ambushed Angela from behind.

“Now!” I commanded.

“ICE RAINS FROM ABOVE!” yelled Fareeha at the top of her lungs.

Needless to say, Angela needed a long, hot bath after that.

Today as I was walking by the lab, Angela popped out and asked me, “have you seen my sweater?”

“Which one?”

“My favourite, the white one you made.”

“No, but I’ll keep an eye out for it”, I replied.

It was my nap time, so I headed back to our room. When I got there, I saw a small lump underneath the covers of Angela’s bed.

Figuring Angela left the sweater there, I threw off the covers, and there I found a pre-teen curled up in a ball, hugging herself, and wearing a white sweater.

“Oh, hi Mama.” Fareeha got onto her feet.

“Is that Angela’s sweater?”

It always amuses me when Fareeha stammers. She seems to only do it when she’s talking to or about Angela. “N- W-well, y-yes, I mean, it’s so cold in here, and it looked so warm.”

“I’ll make you one too”, I laughed. “But what were you doing in Angela’s bed?”

“It’s warm there too.”

I raised an eyebrow at her. She shuffled her feet a little.

“It smells nice.”

“Fareeha Amari, don’t go into people’s things without their permission. Go give Angela her sweater back, she’s been asking for it.”

Fareeha looked sad when she took off Angela’s sweater.

“Fareeha”, I said.

“Yes, Mama?”

“What colour would you like?”

“I want one just like this one.”

“But then we’ll get them mixed up.”

“Oh, I’d be able to tell them apart, trust me.”

“I’ll make you a matching blue one, ok? Blue suits you more.”

“Yes, Mama.”

Fareeha and Flowers

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I've spent most of my life with two seasons instead of four. If I had to pick a favourite season of the north, summer is definitely what I'm more comfortable with in terms of temperature, but there's something special about spring. Maybe it just comes from my hatred of winter, but seeing everything come back to life is just extraordinary. It's a season filled with hope and promise for the future.

We stayed in Russia longer than we thought we would. Although we finished our mission, the weather got worse as we were preparing to leave, and we had to make the decision to stay put until the snow melted. And then when it did, it turned out that the arrangements for our next mission were stalled, so we didn't have anywhere we needed to be.

Since the weather got warmer, Fareeha stopped sharing a bed with me. I know that most children would have had their own beds since before they could even speak, so I tried to consider myself lucky that I could cuddle with Fareeha for as long as I did. Still, it feels lonely when I wake up and feel the empty space next to me.

Fareeha also had a hard time adjusting. We went shopping for a body pillow because she said she wanted something to hold onto at night. Torbjörn took us to an Ikea for our shopping needs. Next to the body pillows was an assortment of giant, stuffed animals. I suggested that Fareeha should get a teddy bear instead of a pillow, but she refused. I shrugged my shoulders, and picked out a giant falcon.

"Mama, I said I don't want one!"

"Who said this is for you? Mama needs a replacement for her baby bird that left the nest."

That shut her up.

Today Fareeha and I left the city for a picnic. The air was pleasantly warm, and the sun had finally dried the aftermath of the previous week's rain. We hiked for a bit until we found rolling hills, green with young grass, and spotted all over with flowers of all varieties.

After lunch, I was reading a book while I assumed Fareeha was following trails of ants with a magnifying glass or something. I fell asleep without realizing it, and when I woke, Fareeha was sitting cross-legged with her back to me, fiddling with something.

"Ya habibti, what are you working on?"

"This", she said, and showed me what was in her hands. She had woven together the stems of several small, white flowers until it made a ring. "I'm going to ask Angela to marry me."

"Oh, Fareeha..." I started, but I couldn't figure out what to say afterwards. Should I tell her to not get her hopes up? Tell her it was a bad idea? I had thought that the one-sided feelings of Fareeha's first love were cute, but no mother wants to see her child being rejected.

Fareeha looked at me expectantly, waiting for me to finish my sentence, so before I could help myself, I said, "Good luck. You have your Mama's blessings."

It was too late to take back what I said. Fareeha's face lit up, and I didn't know what to do.

I followed Fareeha to the research lab. I thought Fareeha wouldn't want me there, but she didn't say anything. I stopped when she turned the corner. Fareeha stood in front of the door, fumbled with the flower ring in her hands, and looked at me. I faked a smile and gave her a cheesy thumbs up, which gave Fareeha the confidence she needed. She inhaled deeply, and walked through the door.

I peeked through the window. Angela's back was to me.

Angela looked up from her work at Fareeha.

Fareeha thrust the flower ring at Angela using both hands.

"Marry me", she said bluntly.

Angela laughed gently, as if they were playing a game. I had never seen such a serious face on Fareeha in reaction to Angela's laughter.

"Ja ja, once you've grown up big and strong, ok?"

Oh, my poor baby, I thought.

I decided it was a good time to console Fareeha as we were getting ready for bed, while Angela was still in the lab. But before I could start the speech I had spent hours articulating in my head, Fareeha spoke first.

"Let's go back to the field next week."

"What for?" I replied.

"I'm going to make Angela another ring. The flowers I used are going to wilt. So I'll have to keep giving her rings until I've grown up big and strong. One day I'm going to be even taller than her. And then I'm going to marry her."

What a beautiful idiot.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for the comments! Also, an amazing tumblr user drew a comic based on this chapter! Check it out at "<http://queer-watch.tumblr.com/post/148795654967/just-a-wee-sketch-comic-inspired-from-a-mothers>" and shower the artist with praise. I am so honoured!

Bonus

Bonus Dialogue between Angela and Fareeha:

“Angela, can two women have babies?”

“Oh yes, it’s been made commercially available for twenty years now. The success rate is still pretty low though.”

“How does it work?”

“Well, having two eggs fuse isn’t actually that uncommon outside of mammals. The process itself isn’t that complicated, you just have to regulate the expression of imprinted genes such as *Igf2*... Sorry, I’m getting ahead of myself. Just take two eggs, put them together, change some things, make sure hormone levels are right, stick it back inside a mom, and you’re good to go.

The first time it was done in mice as early as 2004, but it’s not ethical to experiment on humans. It wasn’t until about fifty years ago that a desperate and ambitious couple experimented on their own embryos (and succeeded) in a sketchy lab somewhere that eventually led to scientific approval for further testing.”

“Is it something you’re interested in?”

“Yes, all scientific progress is interesting.”

“No, I mean, do you want babies?”

“I do like children, but why have babies when you can adopt? Oh, but I have nothing against people who want their own babies. If you ever fall in love with a woman, let me know, and I can do the procedure for you!”

“...”

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